

LETTER

TO 14 14. W. 22.

Lord B—. *Lord*
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WITH AN

Address to the TOWN.

“ You abuse me, because you know what
“ I do ; did I know your actions, I
“ could return it.”



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For W. FLEXNEY, in Holborn.

LETTER

TO

Lord B.

WITH AN

Address to the Town

"The Lord has been good to me, and I have been good to him; and I have been good to the world, and the world has been good to me." "and I have been good to the world, and the world has been good to me."

1792

1792

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1792

LETTER

Lord B—, &c.

MY LORD,

AFTER having heard so much of abuse, I suppose your ears are not much disposed to panegyric; nor, should I be perceived to have fallen into that strain, do I know how I shall find excuse either from you, the world, or myself; since all my acquaintance with you is at second-hand, I have neither received favors nor expect them, and my nature (which I do not boast of therefore as the most amiable) is much

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more

more apt to bring down others to its own level, than to admit of virtues beyond itself. The true reason, why I stand forth your apologist, is because the town condemns you, and I have ever found that giddy body wrong in its first judgement, tho (to speak something in its favor) it does not always fail to adopt the right at last. Besides, I know the world ever thinks itself in duty bound to condemn those who despise it; and that it takes the greatest pleasure in drawing those into public day, who wish to hide themselves in retirement, especially if it has found any opportunity of giving them up to popular clamor. The very means you take to withdraw yourself from the impertinence of company, surround you with innumerable spies, who have a quick invention for every circumstance of your conduct which they cannot explane. They dive into your domestic con-

concerns; they know your own humors, when you know them not yourself; and can tell, much better than you can, whether you are rich or poor, happy or unhappy. I have heard it said, that you are fond of women, and yet that you treated the one you loved with inhumanity. Now for that very reason (tho I have others too) I doubt whether, in the matrimonial state, your generosity or indulgence were more conspicuous. I have heard it said, that you are so strange a man, you hate the restraint of custom, and can love a Turk as much in Europe, as you can an European in Turkey. And this I believe; else why should you have travelled?---Have you seen the manners of so many countries, and yet not learnt those of your own? You know them, I dare say; and if you do, you must know too, that even prudence itself is not sufficient to guard

against the malignancy of envy; and as a man, you must also have learnt, to pay an easy submission to those accidents of fortune, which it was not in your power to prevent. Were you indeed posses of a different disposition, and did you not own that taste for nature, which I think you do; you would have mixt in the common scene, and might have stood a chance of brushing through life without any other rubs than the busy are apt to meet with, and have known as little of the censure of the public, as you would have deserved of their applause. Instead of being acquainted with the delightful study of poetry, of which you are such admirer; instead of displaying the elegance of your taste in architecture or painting, the one the greatest, the other the finest monument of human art, we might have seen you the busy candidate of an election, the dancing attendant

attendant of a levee, or the cats-paw of artful power. In the room of these, what have you done? Have you not deserted the call of ambition, when greater matters have been since agitated in the cabinet than were before acted in the field? Has not the proprietor of a great territory in America led the life of indolence and retirement, when both sides of the hemisphere have been in a ferment? Whilst you have added nothing to your riches by the spoils of your countrymen, do you not wish, with the Khaliff, *to live long enough to employ that money, which others take such pleasure in amassing?* This may have been your conduct; but what else will be said of you? It will be said, that you have been a very different pilgrim to the East, than many of our infatuated ancestors were. It will be said, that you are so far a protestant, as to pay much oftener an adoration to the angels upon earth, than
to

to the saints in heaven. The people, alas ! think *those only to be gods, whom it worships itself.* It will be remembered only, that you have visited the barbarian manners of Mahometan climes, and forgot, that you have made a collection of wit, poetry, and wisdom unknown in our own. It will be said, that so luxurious is your turn, that you have ransacked the East in search of beauty, which yet from eastern jealousy you did not see; and it will be forgot, what you have said, *that a perfect beauty is not to be looked for in the East, but rather in those countries, where literature, arts, and sciences abound.* The reason you have added, gives so strong a lie to those who would traduce the elegance of your mind, I cannot but repete it. *An exact proportion and symmetry, with a proper coloring and expression in every part, are not sufficient to make beauty perfect; this requires the excellencies of the mind;*
they

*they are endless and inexpressible, the
fruits of great genius and a fine edu-
cation.*

Yet women, dear deceivers of our race,
Cheat with the tinsel of a pretty face.

If, among your poets, you are too
fond of the author of the art of love,
you may, perhaps, stand a chance of
meeting with his fate. Had I any
other occasion of being your friend,
than because others are your enemy,
I might, possibly give you a piece of
advice; but then I remember what
another Khaliff said, that *advice is not
to be given in public*. This, however,
I must throw out, for you and others
to ruminate on at leisure. “ Love
“ is no more to be defined the
“ sweet impulse of nature; it is no-
“ thing else than an accursed passion,
“ which one sex is inspired with for
“ the other, since both have been cor-
rupted.

“ rupted. Had there been no origi-
 “ nal sin, the men woud have multi-
 “ plied themselves without love, and
 “ the women——*.”

* Vide an extraordinary Vade mecum, intituled,
Theology for the Pocket, to be had at none of the
 Booksellers in London.

TO THE TOWN.

WHAT are the periods fixt for the return of those impostures which from time to time we see put upon you? How long can you exist without the marvellous; that it shall not be necessary, that the witchcraft of a Mary Squires should be supplied by a Cock-Lane apparition, or the apparition by a rape? How long, whilst oaths are balanced in the scale with probabilities, will you hesitate which to credit? If in this country there must be either perjury or a rape, which is most probable from their frequency?---Verily, if all the miracles that pass in London were true, we have many more than ever were seen at Jerusalem. What however I am

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struck

struck with most, is that none of these things make a deep impression upon your mind; which is soon disposed to forget one wonder, provided it has another to admit. I should be glad to know, by what time-keeper, unknown to the board of longitude, you regulate the duration of each. But I might ask a thousand questions, and never shall receive an answer.

I knew a gentleman, who professed to believe the half of what he saw, and nothing at all of what he heard. Did he observe his rule, he must have found himself in fewer errors than other men; I am afraid however there are not many such philosophers.

Our passions, our vices, our superstitions tend to make us credulous; and, as these are qualities so prevailing, why should we wonder at the lying prattle, or the greedy swallow of the vulgar? When people are so desirous to be led into exaggerations,
there

there will not be wanting those, who are ready to receive the thanks of others at so cheap a rate. It may be difficult to pitch upon a man hardy enough to take upon himself the sole authorship of the lie; but in fact it is by no means necessary that such a one there should be; for false tales are things of quick growth; you have only to set the smallest seed, and it will soon burst forth with vigorous branches.

Conversation must languish without a new topic; and when any such starts into life, embellishments, variations, additions, and allusions will ever be at hand to keep up the ball. When every mouth is open to ask, "Well, what do you hear of Lord B---- to-day?" A man is lookt upon as a stupid fellow, if he tells the story in the same way as every body else has heard it. He may mean perhaps only to vary his language, but that insen-

sibly alters facts; the reflexions of the speaker become accusations of the party; the prejudices of the audience pass sentence of conviction.

When I attended to these first reports, I knew not the great man they accused; yet, from the nature of the tale, the probability of the complaint, this country, in which such a scene is said to be transacted, I was determined to leave him some room for acquittal; though I heard Englishmen say at my elbow, they would have the author hanged up without judge or jury. I know not whether to call such decision more shocking or absurd. It presumes the fact to be proved, yet allows no judge of the proof; and flies directly in the face of that charity which is ingrafted into the law of England. So far from giving the accused a liberty to speak for himself, so far from presuming him innocent, till the evidence is heard, it is convicting him
either

either without evidence, or upon what is false; for how can that which passes through a thousand mouths be otherwise than false? So far from giving the accused a hearing, his friends would hardly be suffered to be heard; and that pre-eminence of our criminal law, the confrontation of witnesses, is exchanged for common report, a far worse representation of facts, than even written depositions. But when I learnt the name of a man, whom I am not without reason to believe possess of tender feelings, capable of friendship, of a delicate and polished turn of mind, and of refined passions, I knew it was impossible he should seek enjoyment at the expense of cruelty, or aim at satisfying by force that appetite, which is never satisfied, but with the willingness of consent. I said, is it possible, that a man who leaves a freedom to himself, should violently wrest it from others? It may be so; but not
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in the affairs of love. Whoever has studied this passion, knows it delights in mutual liberty; and no man who is a friend to the sex, that has these pleasures to dispense, ever thought of forcing them to a concession of what the one would not in a state of constraint be in a capacity to bestow, nor the other to receive *.

He might, thro the prevalence of passion, be led to seek his enjoyment, without the necessary intervention of a priest; by following the dictates of nature, he might overlook the rules of society; this would be no more than a desire of liberty, which however rejects every gratification, that does not arise from the yielding of com-

* Hence it is, that from the order of nature, it is scarce in the single power of any animal, either man or brute (tho the passion is much stronger in the male) to force at pleasure the object of their affections. It is to be sure a lordly act when done, but we are sufficiently humbled in the preparatory advance, from the delays of female capriciousness in an instant when it can so ill be brooked.

compliance. But it is as much a crime against nature, as against society, to use a brutal violence; and what in this country the wantonness of a vicious imagination is scarce ever known to produce. The reason is plain; for seduction is a much more effectual weapon, than force. We know the passion of love is headstrong, and can be much more truly than hunger said to break down stone walls; for the one adds vigor to the body, the other weakens it. But in that extreme, which exceeds brutality, it only shews itself in the lowest rank of wretches, in seizing upon the last plunder they have in their power to make. The great, who have their riches to bestow, are neither forced by this passion into marriage, nor into violence. The marquis brags, he will never marry but for a fortune, because he can get himself the possession of the greatest beauty at a cheaper cost than that of maintaining

taining an indigent wife. Then why should we suppose a lord reduced to such streights, as to make use of the most plebeian and ineffectual means of appeasing an appetite, that could hardly shew themselves in a desert island?

Fortified with these reflexions, I resolved to suspend my judgement upon the issue of a story, which I saw was improbable, and which I heard repeated with all the prejudice of animosity. I was not led away with the silly notion, that a man who had visited Turkey, must of necessity have adopted Turkish manners. Neither am I quite so far a Christian, as to think, that every Turk is the Janissary of injustice, or that he knows no other moral than the rule of power. I know, on the contrary, that those we call cruel, are the most compassionate people upon earth; and that Christian is in turn as much a reproach with them, as

Turk is with us. But when I consider the improved traveller, the author of a tour to the East, if he disunites himself from the busy people of this town, knows none of their factions, and little of their manners, I am led to call his peculiarities a superior taste, and can excuse his search after pleasure from his contempt of flattery and ambition. Intrigues of state are sure of more dangerous consequence, than those with women. And tho I think to give a loose to passions which the order of society requires to be submitted to rules, that they otherwise woud not have known, is a blemish in any character, and an offence to law; yet I think it not such a blemish, as to call upon the odium of all good men, or quite such an offence, as to merit the heavy vengeance of punishment. Let austere parents, who know not how to excuse the imprudencies of youth, because they have forgot its

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influence,

influence, send their unforgiven daughter to add one more to the chaste number of a nunnery; but let this be the rule of other countries, for I never hope to see such austerity prevail here, that for want of a similar prison, the heinousness of this crime shall introduce a transportation to France. Unhappy parents! Unhappy child! But it is their own shame they want to hide, and not that of the object of their pity.

I am not going to consider the enormity of seduction, or the different degrees of crime in either party; that is not the present case; for here is an accusation of force, which no love of pleasure can excuse. Neither shall I say any thing of that law, which makes a man lose his life for so small a matter that he takes away. Let the crime of force be punished with severity as it deserves; but let it be proved. Let it not be in the power of every millener

millener of the age of thirty, whom a little artifice may have led out of her shop, to complain to willing ears that she has lost her virginity, whilst she would rather chuse to appear to have yielded to violence than seduction. Shall then a quarter of an hour's conversation with persons whom fear and inclination would lead, to obey, be presumed to have no effect, in a situation where a change of story would appear to be much more advantageous to the relator, and even favorable to her chastity, though it might be still destructive of her virginity? Women are, indeed, in this respect, most unfortunate culprits; the mere passive fact sufficing to debase them, tho' the heart never gave its consent. But yet there is one powerful specific for this disease, which possesses more than Esculapean virtues; the only shop of medicine being the pocket, and lovers in this age not so

is queamish, but that they would be more glad to take their Helena back again, than to have retaind her; provided she comes home loaded with Trojan spoils.

Suspicion has even fallen upon a Lucretia; but shall in this age, no instigation of parents, no temptation of money, no encouragement of a party, account for those circumstances of a story which probability will never admit of? What! shall the advice of a celebrated preacher to young women be attended with so good effect in every one of his flock, as to make his new-year repetition of it unnecessary in future time?

We know how far the villanies of some men have succeeded, in accusing others of crimes of a very different nature than the present; should we not guard too, lest the other sex might take the example, and vindicate to themselves a profit, which must be

kept out of their hands, whilst accusers of the first sort are attended to in stories so unnatural to believe; when, on the contrary, it may almost seem a disgrace to the character of any man, to have that to urge against the matters it is in their power to allege. False suggestions of the former sort never fail to be severely punished; when they come into a court of justice; though the misfortune is, that the very mention of them carries with it such a baleful influence, that the parties are loth to bring them there, though it be to clear themselves. I hope it will not be esteemed such a disgrace to be falsely suspected of crimes of the latter sort; but that common safety will teach us to bring the unjust accusers to a punishment of equal severity.

The crimes themselves, through every stage, are in England both punished alike. Montesquieu says of
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these sorts of accusation (whose nature is so secret, that they are easy to be made, and hard to be defended from) when false, they only deserve a punishment less than the crime itself. I indeed think they deserve a greater; an unhappy passion may speak for the one, but the other has no other source than in the most abandoned profligacy of human malice. There has been a time in England, and our writers upon criminal law give us several instances*, when these accusations of violence offered to women, were more frequent than they are now; let not the encouragement of the public make this the epocha of their revival. It would well behove then every man of pleasure to beware of an intrigue; especially with a pious daughter, who can back her complaint with a whole troop of sectaries at her heels. Men should

* Sir Matthew Hale's history, i. 635.

should take care, how it might be said of them, that their love of beauty had carried them to Grecian islands, or that they had been upon the spot, where Venus formerly held her temple. It would be still worse for them, if they had trodden upon that land where seraglios are in use; though I should think the keeper of a seraglio would very seldom have occasion to become a ravisher without his own walls. And though they might be noted for the soft arts of a gentle seduction, even the haberdashers of this town shall be found so pure, that nothing but compulsion shall make a purchase of their unholy enjoyment.

If, when such prejudices prevail, a person were to fly from that justice which he cannot expect, how will it be wondred at? But let me hope, there is still fortitude enough remaining in a man of sense to overlook the prejudice of the vulgar: For
what

what should we have to console ourselves with, if law could not defend us from rumor? Let me also further hope, that he would not suffer more in being tried by a jury of his own sex, than he would from one of the other.

Where, however, the circumstances of a case are such, that they must bring the affair into a court of justice, I do not like to anticipate that judgement which it does not belong to me to make; and I doubt not, but the judge who shall make it, will have to say of himself, that he purposely avoided the hearing of every report upon the matter; as I heard another say, that he never read a celebrated paper, till the author was brought before him to be tried.

It has been said to be the disgrace and misfortune of this age, that the opinion of the people should be turned into a court of judicature. Verdicts

can

can then no longer have it in their power to acquit, nor law to condemn. And it must ever be so, if causes are to be prejudged by that common talk, which presumes the world to be in possession of a true state of facts, before a legal inquiry is set on foot *. For my part, was I acquainted with the circumstances of those transactions, the subject of which give rise to these sheets (of which, however, I am as ignorant as I am of the persons of the parties) I woud by no means undertake to state the truth to the public: I think I have given sufficient reasons to excuse it. Those prying tempers, therefore, who woud know the secrets that never existed, will be disappointed, if they open these leaves with an expectation of an admittance into mysteries, the truth of which Grub-street has

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already

* This was never more remarkable, than upon a late trial for a very great offence, I mean the trial of Mrs. Brownrigg; when if any thing ought to have saved the unhappy criminal, it was the exasperation of the vulgar.

already told them, much more fully than they ever will be told again.

What I write comes only from the closet and the heart; and my end will be answered, if from this address to an idle town, I may be able to divert the stream of prejudice. Or will it still be so fond of the marvellous, that no one heightening circumstance shall be added, which can make it suspect, it has been told something more than the truth? Nay, there will not be wanting some perhaps, who can so far reconcile contradictions, that rather than alter their ill-formed opinion, they will presume guilt, where the accusation may be evidently false. No prevarication shall shock them. Circumstances after circumstances shall be added. Even a woman (the only sex that can be rendred capable of a rape) shall be deemed able to commit it. All this shall render the transaction but more believable. Seduction is odious, violence is brutal; but if the person seduced was upon the point of marriage, if the person violated was

of so firm a virtue, that not even a
 mine could subvert; how much more
 odious, how much more brutal

Yet I will not take upon me to say,
 that women in certain situations are
 destitute of all other lovers, but the
 future husbands; not, when day after
 day has still added food to the en-
 generating imagination of inquirers; will
 I ask other questions, than what more
 of new is there still wanting? I know
 of none other, than that the town
 may disbelieve what it has for a time
 so eagerly adopted; and that truth
 may still find a hole to burst through;
 notwithstanding all the mechanism of
 bad or artful designs. This I see, ac-
 thinks, already advancing; and tho I
 cannot hope, that the present excu-
 sation will be quite forgot; without
 some dying murmur, that it was bought
 off, (by that means, indeed, it might
 soon drop); none do I hope, that pub-
 lic talk will subside, which is so fond
 of extremes, and so prejudicial to a
 candid examination, till the accidents
 of time produce a new topic of dis-
 course,

course, or another object of popular odium or applause; yet I begin to expect, that the betraying of such transactions to light, which will only bear to be done in secret, will simply serve to show which is the infidious party. As to the shame that will follow, it is not in the power of human laws to add one circumstance of guilt, if it be in a matter that nature excuses.

These are sentiments submitted to an impartial public, if such a one is to be found; tho I am again aware, it will be said, "That I apply to
 " those who cannot decide, who have
 " not the means of information, each
 " side confounding the heads of the
 " other; to a town, that never judges
 " right, or if it does judge right, judges
 " only right by accident." If such really be the case, as I fear it too often is, and that the town can think as little as it can judge, then let this address be buried in the same silence with the story that gave occasion to it.